BRITISH COLUMBIA

# BC STATS

Service BC
Ministry of Labour & Citizens' Services

Infoline

Contact: bcstats.infoline@gov.bc.ca  Issue: 06-37  September 15th, 2006

- **July exports down 6.1%**
- **Shipments drop 3.8% in July**
- **British Columbians spend average of $673 on beer, wine and spirits in 2005**

## The Economy

- **The value of BC origin exports continued to seesaw in July, slipping 6.1% (*seasonally adjusted*) following an 8.0% increase in June.** Energy exports tumbled 13.9%, reflecting the effect of lower export prices for gasoline. Exports of machinery & transportation equipment (-7.3%), forest products (-5.7%) and industrial & consumer goods (-2.7%) were also down. However, agriculture & fish product exports showed more promise (+3.9%).

  Exports to the US were off 1.2%, as shipments of machinery & auto equipment (-7.9%) and energy (-4.2%) both decreased. Increased exports of forestry (+0.2%), agriculture & fish (+3.2%) and industrial & consumer products (+3.3%) south of the border were unable to offset the declines. Shipments to destinations other than the US plunged 12.8%, largely because of sharp declines in forest (-14.6%) and energy (-25.9%) product exports. However, overseas shipments of agriculture & fish products were up 5.5%.

  Canadian exports rose 2.1% in July, with shipments of energy products (+4.6%), machinery & equipment (+4.9%), and agricultural & fishing products (+9.8%) among those fuelling the growth. Trade in some other goods, including forestry (-1.3%) and automotive (-7.2%) products, slowed in July.

  *Data Source: Statistics Canada & BC Stats*

- **Shipments of goods manufactured in the province dropped 3.8% (*seasonally adjusted*) between June and July.** Producers of durable products (-2.8%) saw shipments fall after having remained flat in June. The value of wood shipments (-4.6%) decreased as producers continued to face low prices for softwood and other wood products. BC producers of primary metals (+3.8%), machinery (-7.9%) and computer & electronic products (-7.4%) also showed notable declines. On the non-durables side, paper (-12.1%) and food (-1.0%) shipments were lower than in June, and shipments by the chemical (-0.8%) and plastics & rubber (-4.2%) industries both fell for the third consecutive month. Overall, non-durables shipments were down 5.0%.

  Newfoundland & Labrador (-8.7%), PEI (-0.5%) and Quebec (-0.1%) were the only other provinces where shipments decreased in July. In percentage terms, Manitoba saw the biggest increase (+10.1% to $1.3 billion) but in terms of dollars, Alberta posted the most significant gain (+4.6% to $5.7 billion). The Canadian total was up 0.8% mainly due to strong increases in commodity prices. Without the effect of price increases, shipments from Canadian factories would have declined 0.6% in July.

  *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **The number of new vehicles sold in the area comprised of BC and the territories inched down 0.1% (*seasonally adjusted*) in July.** Newfoundland & Labrador (+8.9%) and Nova Scotia (-0.9%) were the only other provinces to record declines. Increases ranging from 1.0% in Saskatchewan to 6.6% in Alberta drove overall Canadian sales up 3.0%. Sales of North American-made (-4.7%) passenger vehicles were lower in July, while sales of those manufactured overseas increased (+5.6%).

  *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Housing starts in the province fell back 19.4% (*seasonally adjusted*) in August, following two months of big gains.** Canadian starts were down 9.6%, as most provinces posted declines. BC and Ontario (-18.2%) both recorded double-digit drops, while starts fell a more moderate 8.3% in Alberta. However, starts were up in Quebec (+15.7%), Manitoba (+8.5%) and two of the Atlantic provinces. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

**Report** Now Hiring: BC's Labour Well Running Dry

Did you know...

Canadian companies now spend approximately $24 billion annually on travel and business expenses, almost double the amount in 1997 ($13 billion) Source: Ipsos-Reid

- **The cost of land and new housing in BC's two biggest metropolitan centres continued to climb in July.** Victoria's New Housing Price Index was 3.9% higher than in July 2005, reflecting soaring land values (+10.7%). Housing costs, on the other hand, were flat (+0.0%) in the capital region. Housing (+7.9%) and land (+0.8%) prices both contributed to a 5.4% increase in the Vancouver index. Alberta continued to drive up the national housing price index (+10.8%) with Calgary (+56.0%) and Edmonton (+29.7%) both posting hefty increases over July of last year.

*Data Source: Statistics Canada*

## Beer, Wine and Spirits...

- **British Columbians aged 15 and over spent an average of $673 on beer, wine and spirits in 2005, more than in any other province except Newfoundland & Labrador ($690).** Spending in the territories was even higher ($857 in NWT including Nunavut and $1064 in Yukon). The national average was $637.

Beer ($297) accounted for the biggest share of spending in BC, followed by spirits ($193) and wine ($183). Nationally, per capita expenditures on beer ($322) were about the same as the amount spent on wine ($161) and spirits ($155) combined. 2005 marked the first year where sales of wine in dollar terms surpassed sales of spirits in Canada.

Provincial and territorial liquor authorities earned $4.5 billion from sales of alcoholic beverages in 2005. In BC, sales jumped 7.1% to $786 million, the biggest increase in the country. Ontario and Saskatchewan were among other provinces to post significant increases in revenue over 2004, while Quebec recorded the only decline (-4.4%). Overall Canadian sales were up 3.8%. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

## Gambling

- **In the 2005/2006 fiscal year, approximately 80% of British Columbians aged 19 or older played a lottery, 30% visited a BC casino and 6% visited a provincial commercial bingo hall.**

In terms of player characteristics, 52% were female and most (73%) were aged 35 or older. About (43%) were from households with annual incomes of $60,000 or greater, and nearly three quarters (71%) were educated at the post-secondary level.

The British Columbia Lottery Corporation (BCLC) generated $2.3 billion in revenue from the province's casinos, lotteries and bingo halls in 2005/06. From this revenue, $642 million was paid out to lottery and bingo winners, and a further $697 million went to commissions & service fees and other operating-related expenses. Of the remaining net income (nearly $923 million), $914 million went to the provincial government, with more than half going into consolidated revenue ($556 million). Charitable & community organizations received $138 million.

*Data Source: British Columbia Lottery Corporation*

## Telecommunications

- **Changing consumer demands and the development of new technologies continue to contribute to a shift in the Canadian telecommunications industries and markets.** At the end of the first quarter of 2006, the number of traditional residential telephone lines was down 5.3% over the same period of 2005. In contrast, the wireless telecommunications industry continued to boom, with the total number of subscribers reaching nearly 17 million, up 11.9% from the same quarter of last year. *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

## The Nation

- **Capacity use by Canadian industries edged down for the third consecutive quarter between April and June.** Industries operated at 85.5% of their full capacity during the second quarter, down slightly from 85.7% at the beginning of the year. The decline is partly attributable to lower capacity use in the oil & gas extracting sector (83.8%). Twelve of the 21 industry groups in the manufacturing sector also saw lower capacity use. Forestry and logging establishments ramped up production to 95.4% and utilization remained stable in the construction sector (90.9%). *Data Source: Statistics Canada*

*Infoline* Issue: 06-37
*September 15th, 2006*

For data originating from Statistics Canada, data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the catalogue number.

Infoline Report

Issue: 06-37
Sept. 15, 2006

Contact: Dan Schrier (250) 387-0376
Originally published in *Small Business Quarterly* Issue 06-1.

# Now Hiring: B.C.'s Labour Well Running Dry

*By Jade Norton*

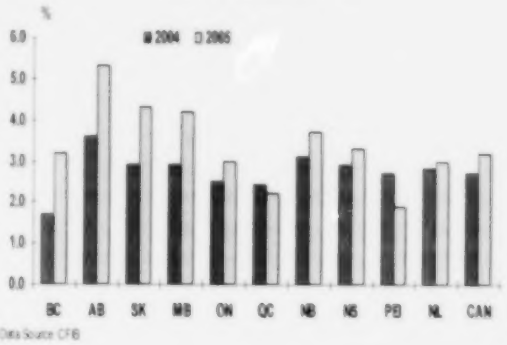
Labour shortage in BC has been a burning topic in recent months. Almost every news broadcast, newspaper and other media are buzzing about BC's hot economy and the province's parched labour pool.

It is not uncommon for the wax and wane of the business cycle to put pressure on labour supply. In the boom era of the 1980s, for example, there was imminent concern over the drying up of the province's labour pool; however, this quickly diminished with the economic recession of the early 1990s. Nonetheless, with the 2010 Olympic Games fast approaching, concerns over whether the province can meet its expectations have returned and intensified. Employers in small, medium, and large enterprises are having more difficulty finding and retaining qualified employees to fill ever increasing numbers of job vacancies.

Surveys conducted by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) have shown that labour shortage has been a constant and growing concern of small- and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in BC and across Canada.[1] According to the most recent CFIB survey (July-December 2005), 52% of SMEs in Canada consider shortage of qualified labour to be a pertinent issue. In BC, over 60% of businesses state this as a major concern, up almost ten percentage points from the 51% who voiced the same worry six months prior (January-June 2005).

According to CFIB, until 2005, BC had remained well below the Canadian average in terms of its rate of job vacancies. However, according to their latest release,2 BC's long-term vacancy rates jumped from 1.7% in 2004 to 3.2% in 2005, bringing it on par with the Canadian average (3.2%). This amounts to an 88.2% increase of long-term job vacancies between 2004 and 2005, the biggest among the provinces. It is estimated that there were 23,000 jobs left vacant for four or more months last year in BC and that 30% of BC businesses had at least one long-term vacancy.

Long term vacancy rates increased substantially in Western Canada between 2004 and 2005




Data Source: CFIB

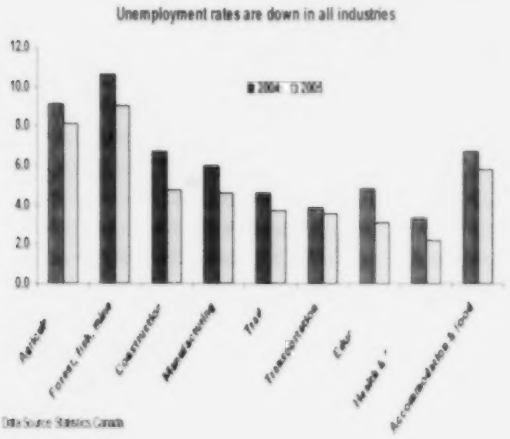
BC is by no means the only province to be affected by long-term vacancy rates. Between 2004 and 2005, SMEs in every province, with the exception of PEI and Quebec, saw increases in vacancy rates.

Almost a quarter of a million Canadian jobs went unfilled for months at a time in 2005, as businesses experienced difficulty recruiting new workers. The vacancy rate was highest for small businesses. Although most Canadian business sectors are challenged by long-term vacancies, some are particularly hard-hit with hiring difficulties. The sector identified by CFIB as being the most heavily impacted across the country is the construction industry which had a long-term vacancy rate of 4.7% in 2005. Other sectors affected include agriculture (3.9% long-term vacancy rate) retail (3.7%) and transportation (3.5%).

[1] CFIB Our Members' Opinions Surveys No 47-57 2000-2005
[2] CFIB Help Wanted: Long-term vacancies a major small business challenge. April, 2006

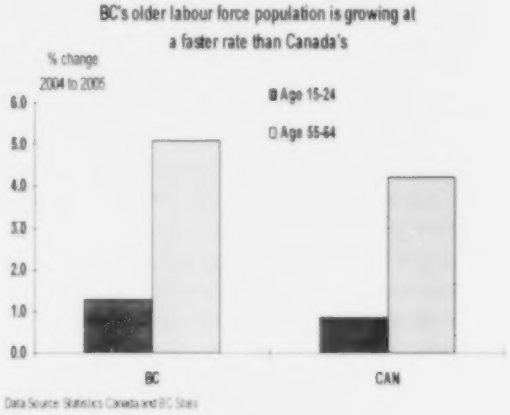
Although overall labour force participation rates have remained relatively unchanged between 2004 and 2005, they have increased among those aged 15-24 (+1.5 pp) [3] and among those aged 45-64 (+0.8 pp). Participation among those in the youngest work-age cohort (15-19 years of age) increased the most between 2004 and 2005 (+2.2 pp) while participation rates in the age cohort that comprises most of BC's labour force (those aged 25-44) slipped (-1.0 pp) over the same period.

BC's unemployment rate has fallen from over 8.0% in 2003 to about 4.9% as of May of this year. Unemployment rates dropped significantly between 2004 and 2005 in virtually all major sector classifications, most notably in health care (down 1.7 pp to 2.2%) and education (down 1.7 pp to 3.1%) both of which began to recover from major slips in recent years. Construction remains the sector that has seen the most considerable declines in unemployment rates over the past few years falling from 8.8% in 2003 to 6.7% in 2004 and dropping further to 4.7% in 2005. Agriculture has also seen noteworthy drops in the past few years falling 2.5 percentage points from 2003 to 2004 and a further percentage point in 2005.



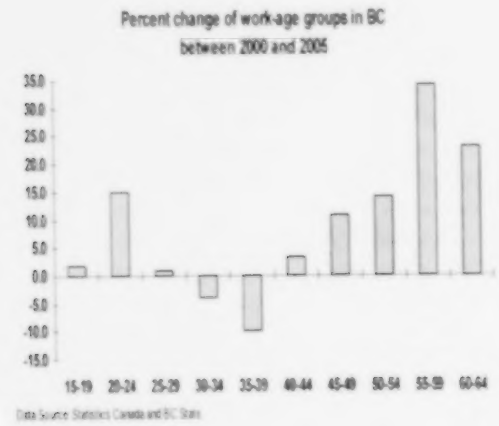

Though, generally, issues of labour supply resulting from the economic cycle tend to be self-correcting, problems arising from other areas can involve more of an effort in terms of intervention and prevention on behalf of government, business, and communities alike. The current concern over labour shortage in BC and Canada as a whole involves obvious components outside the economic cycle. Canadian employment grew for the 13th year in a row in 2005, the longest stretch of gains since the increases of the 60's and 70's when more and more women were entering the work-force. Now it is arguably the ageing population that will affect future numbers.

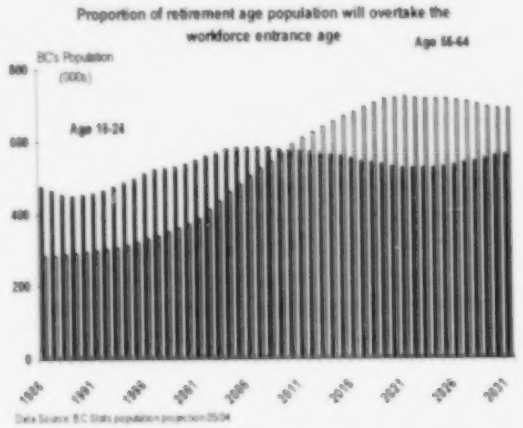
Indeed, the biggest issue with regard to BC's shortage of workers is the province's ageing population and lack of young potential workers to fill the shoes of retirees. As the baby boomer cohort begins retiring, a record number of job vacancies will be left behind. BC has an older demographic makeup than the Canadian average, which indicates that the province may be hit harder than some other regions of the country.




Between 2004 and 2005, for example, BC's total population increased by 1.3%. Over the same period, the number of people aged 15-24 increased at the same rate (+1.3%), while the population of British Columbians between the ages of 55 and 64 increased at more than four times the pace (+5.1%).

[3] Note: pp denotes percentage points.




Over the same period, Canada's population of 55 to 64-year-olds (+4.2%) rose at a slower pace. Historically, the potential new entrants to the workforce (those aged 15-24) have far exceeded the retiring population, though this is no longer the case: the size of BC's young population has levelled off while the older working aged population has begun to skyrocket. The gap will continue to widen as more and more boomers reach retirement age, especially given that the number of people in the youngest of workforce age groups is also declining. In 2005, approximately 14% of the province's population was between the ages of 15 to 24, while about the same share of the population was 65 or over. According to BC Stats population projections by 2010, 13% of the population will be in the younger group and 15% will be 65 and over. Though it may seem far away, by 2031 these proportions are predicted to be at approximately 10% and 24% respectively.

As the ageing population is inevitable, other issues have come to the forefront in addressing BC's waning labour pool. Immigration of skilled workers remains important and many are calling for a re-vamp of immigrant selection criteria in hopes of bringing more immigrants to BC to fill more jobs.

However, although immigration of skilled workers is an important component in addressing the labour shortage, it will not be sufficient to solve the problem. The proportion of BC's population who are over the age of 65 will continue to grow.

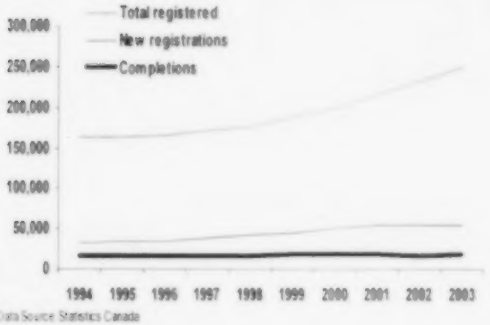
Domestic inter-provincial migration is also a factor as both one of the causes and one of the proposed solutions to BC's diminishing labour pool. Alberta's booming economy and resulting job opportunities have contributed to a net out-migration from BC over the past few years, which has also contributed to the reduced number of skilled workers in BC. Though recruiting migrants from other parts of the country may help with the shortage, BC would face fierce competition from its neighbouring province as well as other regions of Canada who are looking to tap the same resource.

It is argued by some that impediments to recruiting and training of new employees have also contributed to an overall skills shortage. The BC Chamber of Commerce[4] identifies the effectiveness of apprenticeship and training programmes as a concern in labour issues. Many industries, particularly construction, have voiced concern over the infeasibility and expense of proper training processes that are difficult for smaller businesses to institute and maintain. There has also been talk of lack of cohesion between industries and the education system both at the secondary and post-secondary level. There have been growing concerns that the education system no longer encourages young people to view trades as viable career choices and that training completion rates are slowing as programmes are taking longer to complete.

[4] October 2005 news release from the BC Chamber of Commerce: http://www.bcchamber.org

A recent Statistics Canada overview of apprenticeship training in Canada[5] examined trends in Canada and its regions between 1991 and 2003. According to the data, in 2003, the average age of apprentices was 30 years, up from 29 in 1993. Numbers of registered apprentices have been increasing steadily since 1995 and reached 249,000 in 2003. The largest number of registrants was in building construction. Trends in apprenticeship completion have also been on the rise, though not nearly to the same extent. In the building construction trades, for instance, completions in registered apprenticeship training dropped significantly between 1993 and 2003 (from 3,097 to 2,520), despite the increase in new registrants and total number of registered apprentices in this trade group over the same period.

Trades apprenticeship registration levels have increased faster than completions over the last decade of data




Data Source: Statistics Canada

There are, of course, many factors that can affect such trends, though the results do seem to add fuel to an argument that many trades groups are making. These issues merit further exploring.

Cost is another difficulty faced by employers in terms of training and recruiting skilled workers; not only do employers face paying for training, but they are also met with reduced productivity while training occurs. Perhaps more pertinent is the fear of lost investment. Many SMEs have complained of providing skill-training and development for their current employees only to have these employees recruited by other companies.

Wage increases have also been suggested as a partial solution to the shortage of workers in the province. If wages were to increase substantially, it is likely that more people would be drawn back into the workforce. However, production and capacity utilization rates would also need to go up.

The BC Chamber of Commerce, among other organizations, has made recommendations that community and government leaders lobby to make it a priority to develop partnerships and strategies to recruit and develop human resources from non-traditional sources of workers such as Aboriginals, immigrants, visible minorities and people with disabilities.

In BC's 2006 budget,[6] the government committed to spend $90 million over the next three years towards new tax credits for training and also increased support of programmes encouraging the participation of First Nations, women and disadvantaged youth. Also welcomed by business advocates such as the BC Chamber of Commerce, were additional measures focused on enhancing skills in a number of sectors with an increase of $39 million for the Industry Training Authority. The degree to which these measures will address the problem remains to be seen.

Early retirement will likely become less and less common and it has been suggested that the mandatory retirement age be extended or lifted altogether, making it possible for older workers to continue working if they so wish. Indeed, many retirees have voiced feeling "forced" into retirement before they feel ready and have expressed eagerness to continue working into much later years.

[5] Statistics Canada. *Trends in Registered Apprenticeship Training in Canada*. Cat. # 81-004-XIE/2006002. Released June 26, 2006.

[6] October 2005 news release from the BC Chamber of Commerce. www.bcchamber.org

Analysts[7] expect that the retirement of the baby-boom generation in Canada will prompt cultural and institutional changes. The baby-boomer generation also encompasses the first cohort of women to face retirement after having worked for most of their adult lives.

Talk of labour shortages have been around for a long while, especially since the wake of the terrorist attacks on the US in 2001 when concerns of fewer immigrants coming to North America fuelled already strong fears of labour shortages resulting from the retiring boomers.

BC's ageing population is combining with the hot economy to cause major labour shortage problems. Suggested solutions, such as putting an end to mandatory retirement, more cohesion among the trades and the education system, and a shift in immigration policies would all take time. BC's labour shortage, on the other hand, is no longer looming; it has arrived, such that it is likely no longer an option to just expect that the normal market adjustments will rectify the situation.

[7] Statistics Canada study, New Frontiers of Research on Retirement. March 27, 2006. Cat #75-511-X.

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- Five steps to formulate your information needs
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- Questionnaire design—how to avoid common pitfalls in wording, sequencing and layout
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- Processing survey responses

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- October 4-5, 2006
- 8:30 am - 4:30 pm
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**Refreshments will be served throughout the day**

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This is a practical statistical course that covers the basic aspects of survey data analysis. This course will appeal to novice analysts and those who are required to interpret statistical findings. It provides an overview of basic types of research as well as analytical requirements. This is followed by a short treatment of survey sampling and types of data. Some of the analytical techniques that will be covered include cross tabulations, chi-square and some aspects of linear regression. The workshop includes a hands on data analysis exercise and a discussion on the principles for presenting results.

- Analytical requirements and sources of data
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- Types of Data
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- Grouping and graphic data
- Analytical techniques
- Interpreting and presenting analytical results

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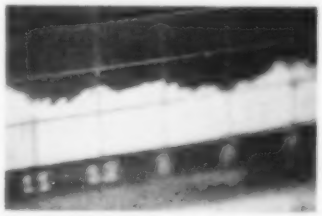

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# Infoline

September 15, 2006
Issue 06-37

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also on the Internet at www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca


## BC at a glance . . .

| POPULATION (thousands) | Apr 1/06 | % change on one year ago |
|---|---|---|
| BC | 4,292.2 | 1.3 |
| Canada | 32,501.1 | 1.0 |
| **GDP and INCOME** | | |
| *(BC - at market prices)* | 2005 | % change on one year ago |
| Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)* | 168,011 | 6.8 |
| GDP *($ 1997 millions)* | 144,028 | 3.5 |
| GDP *($ 1997 per Capita)* | 33,853 | 2.2 |
| Personal Disposable Income *($ 1997 per Capita)* | 20,693 | 2.5 |
| **TRADE ($ millions, seasonally adjusted)** | | % change on prev. month |
| Manufacturing Shipments - Jul | 3,403 | -3.8 |
| Merchandise Exports - Jul | 2,740 | -6.1 |
| Retail Sales - Jun | 4,419 | -1.4 |
| **CONSUMER PRICE INDEX** | % change on one year ago | 12-month avg % change |
| *(all items - Jul 2006)* | | |
| BC | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| Vancouver | 2.0 | 1.8 |
| Victoria | 1.8 | 2.0 |
| Canada | 2.4 | 2.5 |
| **LABOUR FORCE (thousands)** | | % change on prev. month |
| *(seasonally adjusted)* | Aug '06 | |
| Labour Force - BC | 2,304 | 0.0 |
| Employed - BC | 2,193 | -0.1 |
| Unemployed - BC | 111 | 2.3 |
| | | Jul '06 |
| Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)* | 4.8 | 4.7 |
| Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)* | 6.5 | 6.4 |
| **INTEREST RATES (percent)** | Sep 13/06 | Sep 14/05 |
| Prime Business Rate | 6.00 | 4.50 |
| Conventional Mortgages - 1 year | 6.40 | 5.00 |
| - 5 year | 6.75 | 5.80 |
| **US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE** | Sep 13/06 | Sep 14/05 |
| *(avg. noon spot rate)* Cdn $ | 1.1191 | 1.1822 |
| US $ *(reciprocal of the closing rate)* | 0.8926 | 0.8469 |
| **AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE RATE** | | % change on one year ago |
| *(industrial aggregate - dollars)* | Aug '06 | |
| BC | 728.13 | 3.6 |
| Canada | 734.85 | 3.8 |

**SOURCES:**

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Wage Rate } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

For latest Weekly Financial Statistics see www.bankofcanada.ca

## BC and Regional population projections

Projected population to 2031 for British Columbia and a variety of small regions within B.C. (P.E.O.P.L.E. 31).

www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/pop/pop/popproj.asp#admin

## Regional employment projections

BC Stats, with the financial assistance of the Ministry of Advanced Education, developed the Regional Employment Projection Model (REPM), designed to project industrial and occupational employment in regions of the Province of British Columbia.

www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/lss/repm.asp

## Socio-Economic Profiles & Indices 2005

Updated annually, this body of work provides a coherent and relatively comprehensive measurement of social stressors at sub-provincial areas. Charts, tables and, within the indices, consolidated rankings, make the information broadly accessible.

www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/sep/index.asp

**Released this week by BC STATS**

- Exports, July 2006
- Earnings and Employment Trends, Aug. 2006

**Next week**

- Consumer Price Index, August 2006


BC STATS, Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services, Box 9410 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9V1
Tel: (250) 387-0327 Fax: (250) 387-0329 Web: www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca E-mail: BC.Stats@gov.bc.ca